

A Feast Fit for Everyone

IDDSI's UK festival celebrated quality and variety in nutrition and hydration

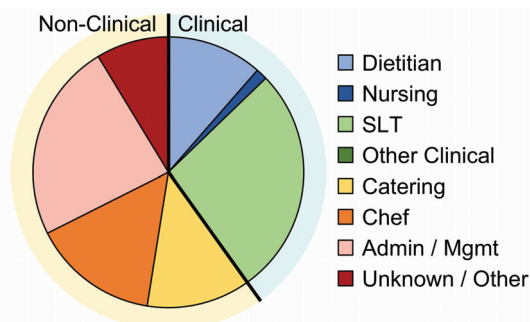
Since the UK adoption of IDDSI in 2019 we are becoming more familiar with the international standards of drink thickness and food texture. IDDSI labels are now widely seen on food & drink products, and in hospitals and care home catering situations. When people have conditions affecting their ability to eat & drink (dysphagia), IDDSI's standard language can provide consistency and reliability. But this needn't mean bland, monotonous meals: the recent festival showcased the very best in quality food and drink.

Festival Facts

Caring and catering for people with dysphagia involves a wide range of people and organisations, and IDDSI strongly supports communication between these diverse stakeholders. To that end, they held an interactive gathering in Central London in 2019: the first IDDSI "festival". There was clear demand for events located more centrally in the UK, and this year IDDSI chose the OEC: a modern venue on the outskirts of Sheffield.

In March 2022 the UK IDDSI Reference Group (UKIRG) reached out to organisations with a potential interest. Very quickly, sponsors began committing and tickets were released to the public. The ticket price (£30) was set to the minimum needed to cover venue hire, all-day catering and the processing fee charged by the online ticketing provider. With a little word-of-mouth marketing, the 200 capacity tickets sold out and some extra capacity was negotiated with the venue: 224 delegates were registered on the day. The broad range of interests is shown in **Figure 1**. Attendees travelled from around the UK and abroad: Kuwait, Denmark, Ireland, South Africa, Canada, and the IDDSI co-chairs attended from Canada and Australia.

Figure 1: Fields of interest for 224 attendees, with a 42:58% split between clinical and non-clinical roles



Presentations

IDDSI co-chair Dr Julie Cichero opened the festival with a stunning keynote presentation featuring an impressive portfolio of IDDSI case studies from around the world. Beginning with a sobering fact from her home country, Australia, where "choking is the second highest cause of preventable death in aged care", Dr Cichero then revealed how IDDSI standards are being used in medical research to better understand choking. She further reviewed a wide range of research using IDDSI: from paediatric dysphagia - thickening infant formula - to COVID-19 treatment and recovery (See **Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Dr Julie Cichero's keynote presentation at the IDDSI festival



Professor David Smithard gave a second keynote presentation; for many years he has chaired the UK Swallowing Research Group (UKSRG) which hosts its own biennial conference. Professor Smithard presented a mind-blowing array of medical issues which can result in dysphagia. He described how dysphagia impacts upon different medical conditions from his own experience and published research. Current research is revealing promising tools for better diagnosis, understanding and treatment of dysphagia and associated conditions (See **Figure 3**).

Figure 3: Andy Cullum's live demonstration of pretty, practical piping



The IDDSI festival schedule was designed to include plenty of time for circulation, discussion and activities with the exhibitors, so presentations were kept brief and snappy. Highlights included:

- Andy Cullum demonstrated amazingly effective piping techniques for pureed food live on stage, creating a meal of sausage, mash and peas, and highlighting how just a few seconds' of extra effort can make an enormous improvement to the visual appeal

- Janne Schack presented a mini IDDSI audit tool which is really useful for quickly checking IDDSI levels in-situ
- Fiona Gardiner and Caroline Ogier presented results from a pilot study they carried out in Guernsey, describing very positive results when trialling IDDSI training in their hospital
- Rachael Masters presented a delicious and nutritious snack trolley, running through lots of ways to increase the nutritional content of snacks and drinks, keeping the portions manageable, appealing and varied
- Suiting the cabaret-seating layout, Matthew Done and Preston Walker toasted the event with thickened-alcoholic-drinks. Matthew usefully explained how different thickener types affect the taste of drinks such as red wine, tea & whiskey. They revealed how to choose the thickener which gives the best taste, as well as a stable IDDSI consistency.

Fun times with the IDDSI funnel

Attendees were among a privileged few around the world to receive an IDDSI funnel which they were able to put into practice immediately, testing the many thick drink samples presented at the festival. The first run of these funnels has been supported by IDDSI, but large-scale distribution will depend on recruiting international re-sellers to ship to individuals and organisations. Another route will be distribution directly by commercial parties, e.g. one major drinks thickener has already commissioned a version of the funnel, branded and labelled with their compliments. In the meantime, if you would like to express an interest in purchasing funnels – no commitment – please complete the online form at: <https://forms.office.com/r/mH62U3r6GP> or scan the QR code in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4: The IDDSI funnel, and a QR code linking to an online form to express an interest



Activities

The festival floor plan had been designed to encourage interaction and IDDSI employed activities to promote engagement even further:

- Delegates were rewarded for engaging with sponsors with a stamp on their festival “passport card”. Completed cards were entered into a draw to win one of two Fit Bit personal fitness tracker devices
- Exhibitors supplying food & drink samples were enrolled in a “people’s choice” competition according to delegates’ votes:
- The award for texture-modified food went to Mrs Gill’s Kitchen, whose dishes included sensationally zingy Thai Curry (IDDSI Level 4) and Spiced Apple Cake (IDDSI Level 4)
- The award for drinks went to Nestlé Health Science for their thickened San Pellegrino Lemonade (IDDSI Level 3): refreshingly sparkling.

Exhibitors

Two commercial exhibitors at premium level represented the full range of IDDSI levels between them. Nestlé Health Science demonstrated their popular and versatile drinks thickener ThickenUp Clear in a range of drinks including ‘mocktails’ and sparkling lemonade. Apetito constructed a model kitchen on site serving hot food fresh from their own oven. Delegates were able to sample meals and snacks across the range of IDDSI food textures, e.g. sticky toffee pudding was very effectively adapted to IDDSI Level 4, 5, or 6.

Two prominent professional bodies were given complimentary exhibition space: the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists and the British Dietetic Association each had a busy time at their information-packed stands (See **Figure 5**).

Figure 5: Sponsors exhibiting at the IDDSI festival



IDDSI News and Strategy

The small team of volunteer board members comprising IDDSI recently met and agreed future goals focussing on fostering IDDSI uptake and implementation in all settings and contexts.

Let’s review some achievements from the past 12 months:

- IDDSI hosted 40 events in a combination of live and streamed online webinar presentations, reaching over 2,300 participants. IDDSI’s YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/channel/UC0I9FDjwJR0L5svIGCvIqHA/videos) continues to increase in popularity with almost 250,000 views in the past year.
- The iddsi.org website (over 500,000 visits in the past year) remains the “single source of truth” for IDDSI documents, as well as hosting resources to help implement, train and audit
- 36 language translations are hosted on iddsi.org: 10 are fully complete with all documents translated and verified
- The UK festival was organised and hosted by the UK IDDSI reference group, a collection of around 30 representatives of dysphagia stakeholders including healthcare, catering, science and nutrition. Membership of the group is open and there are active working teams focussing on educational material, communications and research. Several festival delegates have asked to join and if you are also interested, and can commit at least 5 hours per month, please email: uk@iddsi.org with a brief introduction
- Globally there are 24 currently-active reference groups, with a further 26 in varying degrees of development. See www.iddsi.org/Around-the-World for details
- For monthly updates on IDDSI news, join the 25,000 subscribers to the regular “e-Bite” newsletters by email: www.iddsi.org/Contact